

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7475

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SNAR, TU

SUBJ: MFA SPOKESMAN RIDICULES ISTANBUL BOMBING STORY

1. TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN SEMIH AKBIL WEDNESDAY (JANUARY 8) LABELLED AS "LACKING IN SERIOUSNESS, INCOHERENT AND UNTRUE" A REPORT IN THE ANKARA DAILY BARIS THAT IN 1971 THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERED USING THE SIXTH FLEET TO SHELL ISTANBUL OVER THE POPPY ISSUE.

2. THE BARIS STORY, ON THE FRONT PAGE OF WEDNESDAY'S EDITION, WAS HEADLINED "WASHINGTON POST'S REVELATION--IN 1971 NIXON CONSIDERED BOMBING ISTANBUL--WASHINGTON POST DISCLOSES THAT BECAUSE OF POPPIES NIXON AIDE DISCUSSED THE SIXTH FLEET BOMBING ISTANBUL." THE BARIS REPORT WAS BASED ON AN ARTICLE BY EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN IN THE DECEMBER 22 EDITION OF THE POST. SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME ARTICLE HAD EARLIER APPEARED IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE OF ESQUIRE MAGAZINE.

3. ALTHOUGH THE EPSTEIN ARTICLE MADE CLEAR THAT BOMBING ISTANBUL WAS NOT A SERIOUS PROPOSAL, THE BARIS REPORT PLAYED IT

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SERIOUSLY. DECLARED BARIS: "THIS REVELATION IN THE WASHINGTON

POST ILLUSTRATES THE CRITICAL STATE TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS
HAD REACHED DURING THE NIXON PERIOD."

4. NO OTHER TURKISH DAILY PICKED UP THE BARIS STORY NOR DID THE
AKBIL STATEMENT APPEAR IN THE PRESS. HOWEVER, AKBIL'S STATEMENT
WAS PROMINENTLY PLAYED IN RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS BROADCASTS.

5. IN EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE STORY, LEFTIST COLUMNIST ALI SIRMEN,
WRITING THURSDAY IN CUMHURIYET, NOTED THAT THE WASHINGTON POST
HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR UNCOVERING MANY WASHINGTON SCANDALS. SIRMEN
DECLARED THAT THE PROPOSAL TO BOMB ISTANBUL WAS ONE MORE EXAMPLE
OF THE HEARTLESSNESS OF IMPERIALISM.

6. THE EPSTEIN ARTICLE IN THE PAST HAS, HOWEVER, FORMED THE BASIS
FOR AT LEAST ONE EARLIER PRESS REPORT. ON JANUARY 5, THE ISTANBUL
DAILY MILLIYET CARRIED A PAGE 7 STORY UNDER THE HEADLINE: "WASHINGTON
POST SAYS: 'TURKEY'S SHARE OF WORLD OPIUM SMUGGLING 3 TO 8 PERCENT'
--'AMERICA'S ATTITUDE AGAINST TURKEY WITH RESPECT TO POPPIES UNJUST'
--AMERICAN NEWSPAPER SAYS 'THERE IS NOT EVIDENCE THAT 80 PER CENT
OF SMUGGLED OPIUM COMES FROM TURKEY.'"

7. STILL EARLIER, ON DECEMBER 6, MASS CIRCULATION GUNAYDIN
CARRIED A STORY BASED ON THE ESQUIRE VERSION OF THE EPSTEIN
ARTICLE. LIKE THE LATER MILLIYET PIECE, THE GUNAYDIN STORY FOCUSED
ON THE ARTICLE'S IMPLICATION THAT TURKEY HAD UNJUSTLY BEEN BLAMED
FOR A VERY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF ILLICIT OPIUM PRODUCTS REACHING
THE U.S. THE PAPER ALSO CARRIED EXTENSIVE EXCERPTS FROM ESQUIRE.

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